## ****COMS 333 – Rhetoric of the American Presidency****

**Contact Information Office Hours**

Justin W. Kirk, Ph.D. TR 2pm-3:30pm

[jkirk11@unl.edu](mailto:jkirk11@unl.edu) or by appointment

[Book a Meeting](Book%20a%20Meeting%20) Louise Pound Hall 371

<https://unl.zoom.us/j/2537322032>

### Part 1: Required and Relevant Information

#### ****Mission of the Department of Communication Studies****

The mission of the faculty and students of the Department of Communication Studies is to examine human symbolic activity as it shapes and is shaped by relationships, institutions, technology, and culture.  This work concerns the creation, analysis, and critique of messages ranging from face-to-face to digital media contexts.  The department’s research and teaching devote particular attention to scholarly initiatives aimed at understanding and explaining the role of communication in (a) facilitating civic engagement, mediating public controversies, and organizing for social change, (b) constituting individual and family health, promoting healthy behaviors, and helping persons navigate relational challenges, and (c) creating, maintaining, and challenging personal, social, and community identity in a complex and diverse world.

**Academic Dishonesty and Student Misconduct**

The Department of Communication Studies is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity. The Department adopts the campus definition of academic dishonesty in the Student Code of Conduct (Article 3, Section B-1) including cheating, fabrication or falsification, plagiarism (including self-plagiarism), abuse of academic materials, complicity in academic dishonesty, falsifying grade reports, impermissible collaboration, and misrepresentation. The instructors will meet with the student and if they determine that academic dishonesty or misconduct has occurred, the instructor will prepare a written account and file a “Misconduct Referral Form” with the Office of the Dean of Students. The full “Academic Dishonesty and Student Misconduct” policy is linked to the department’s website:  <https://comm.unl.edu/forms-and-policies>

The Department of Communication Studies “Grading and Grade Appeals” policy document is linked to the department’s website:  <https://comm.unl.edu/forms-and-policies>

#### ****Accommodations for Students with Disabilities****

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options privately. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). If you are eligible for services and register with their office, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so they can be implemented in a timely manner. SSD contact information: 232 Canfield Admin Bldg.; 402-472-3787

#### Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Department of Communication Studies is committed to achieving inclusive excellence as outlined by the university’s [Office of Diversity and Inclusion](https://diversity.unl.edu/diversity-home). As communication scholars and teachers, we believe communities and relationships are enriched when we give voice and value to diverse perspectives based on  “group and social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, indigeneity, class, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, country of origin, and [(dis)ability](http://www.accessiblesociety.org/topics/demographics-identity/dkaplanpaper.htm)), historically underrepresented populations, and cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations.” We are committed to continual reflection and refinement of curriculum, scholarly endeavors, and community engagement to achieve goals of inclusiveness and equal opportunities for our students, faculty, and staff. If you have questions or concerns, feel free to discuss these with your instructors, the Chair of the department ([Dr. Jody Koenig Kellas](https://comm.unl.edu/jody-koenig-kellas)), members of the department’s [Committee on Diversity and Inclusion](https://comm.unl.edu/committees), or the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

#### ACE Credit

COMM 333 satisfies ACE Outcome 5: Use knowledge, historical perspectives, analysis, interpretation, critical evaluation, and the standards of evidence appropriate to the humanities to address problems and issues. As such, you will be asked to present one historical analysis of a president’s rhetorical approach, complete two written examinations, and complete a 10-12 page term paper on some aspects of presidential rhetoric.

#### Student Concerns and Feedback

Your experience with this course is important to me. If you have questions, concerns, or positive feedback, please contact me at jkirk11@unl.edu. If I am unable to respond, or you feel I've not adequately addressed your concerns, you can contact my direct supervisor, Department Chair Jody Kellas at jkellas2@unl.edu. If your concern is still not resolved, please contact [june.griffin@unl.edu](mailto:june.griffin@unl.edu).

#### Assignment Turn In

All assignments must be submitted through Canvas as explained in each assignment description. Assignments will not be accepted via email or any other format. All assignments will automatically be run through Turnitin to be screened for plagiarism. It is your responsibility to use Canvas effectively to turn in your assignments and to ensure that your assignment is properly submitted before the assignment due date according to course specifications. PLEASE NOTE: Your assignments MUST be Microsoft Word documents or PDFs. If you are saving your assignments on your MAC, you must add the .doc or .docx file extension to your document in order for it to be accepted.

#### Accommodations

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

#### Course Credit

Please note that Communication Studies majors must earn a grade of ‘C’ or better to receive credit for the course. All assignments and exams must be completed in order to earn a ‘C’ or better in the course. The Department of Communication Studies “Grading and Grade Appeals” policy document is linked to the department’s website: https://comm.unl.edu/forms-andpolicies.

#### Incompletes

Incomplete grades are rarely assigned in this class. Please plan to complete all work for the course within the semester you are taking it. In the event, you experience circumstances that you see as potentially warranting an incomplete, please note that you must have completed at least 75% of the work in the course and you must approach me before the last week of classes with a proposal for completion of the work.

#### Title IX

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same accountability and the same support applied to offenses against other protected categories; such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, UNL offers several resources for reporting and support (https://www.unl.edu/equity/title-ix). Located in Canfield Administration 128, Tami Strickman is UNL's Title IX coordinator. Her contact number is 402- 472-3417. In the Student Union, Jan Deeds runs the Women's Center and is supervisor of PREVENT (the on campus student organization aimed toward sexual assault awareness and bystander intervention). Her contact information is jdeeds1@unl.edu, and 402-472-2598. Also located in the Student Union, Voices of Hope provides support in answering questions and guidance in reporting options. Please find the many resources offered by Voices of Hope at http://involved.unl.edu/gender/advocate. Additional support is offered through Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) located in the University Health Center on the second floor. The contact number for CAPS is 402-472-7450. In addition, be aware that as the director of the debate program at the University, I am a mandatory Title IX reporter and will report any incidents I am made aware of that rise to the level of a reportable incident.

#### Resources for International Students

[Academic Mentoring/Coaching for International Students: First Year Experience Team](http://success.unl.edu/international)18

[ESL Support Lab](https://www.unl.edu/piesl/esl-support-lab) [Intensive English Program](https://global.unl.edu/english/)

[Academic Success Program](https://www.unl.edu/piesl/academic-support) [OASIS](https://www.unl.edu/oasis/academic-success-and-intercultural-services)

[International Peer Mentors](http://success.unl.edu/international#mentors) [Writing Center](http://www.unl.edu/writing/home)

### Part 2: Course Information and Policies

#### Course Description

The American Presidency exists as the most important and powerful communication apparatus at the hands of the federal government. When the president speaks, cameras power up, mics go hot, and the nation watches and listens. The presidential campaign season consumes eighteen months of media attention every four years, presidential inaugurals, announcements, press conferences, and impeachment trials are covered by national news and viewed by millions of citizens. Tens of millions tune in for presidential debates, and even more when the highest office in the land speaks after a national tragedy. The rhetorical analysis of presidential speech contributes much to the study of the office, spurning entire books dedicated to the specific theory. (See for example, Tulis, The Rhetorical Presidency.) In order to understand the central power of the office of American President, this course offers a historical and comparative study of presidential address throughout American history.

Because presidential communications are recorded and archived for study, access to this vast wealth of discursive data provides an opportunity to understand the tools and techniques rhetoric offers to the discipline. Understanding presidential rhetoric contributes directly to civic engagement and awareness. Much of public policy and media discourse in American society is driven by the agenda and speeches of the president. How can citizens become better informed about the nuanced and practiced conventions and expectations facing the presidency? Rhetoric provides one method of analysis for understanding how the peculiar nature of the presidency shapes and influences all aspects of American culture.

#### Course Objectives

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Explain the utility of viewing the American Presidency as a rhetorical actor.

2. Apply generic categorization principles to the analysis of presidential rhetorical acts.

3. Outline and evaluate speeches according to generic and effectiveness analysis principles.

4. Judge presidential rhetorical acts according to their historical precedents.

5. Evaluate innovations and contributions to the presidential genres of discourse.

#### Readings and Class Participation

You are expected to complete all syllabus readings prior to attending class. You are expected to participate in class discussions and provide analysis and insight during class about the rhetorical artifacts we are examining in class. Classroom experiences contribute positively to the university learning environment and so you are expected to participate in discussion in a way that is respectful of others’ perspectives and experiences. This course is designed to deal with difficult and often problematic material. As adults and students in a university environment, I expect every student to approach the material in a critical, scholarly, and responsible manner. The purpose of the class is to provide you with the tools necessary to examine and analyze a brutal, violent, and often extremely anxiety-inducing world. We will not shy away from difficult discussions, rather we will seek them out and as your instructor, I need your assistance to take this journey. Understanding that the content can be difficult to confront at times, I will do my best to provide trigger warnings and content warnings for any material deemed sensitive or violent. If I do not meet your expectations in this regard, please let me know directly so that I can remedy the situation.

#### Attendance

Attendance is essential to success in this course. Lectures will not be recorded, but power point slides will be provided on the canvas page prior to class. Attendance will be taken throughout the semester to ensure that you are showing up for lecture and discussion material. Excused absences include personal emergencies with documentation, university sanctioned activities or competitions, and prior authorization by me. Attendance will constitute 10% of your overall grade for the course.

#### Netiquette: Communication Courtesy Code

All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, discussions, and chats. If I deem any of them to be inappropriate or offensive, I will first schedule a time to meet with the student to discuss the issue, then if the issue is not resolved I forward the message to the Chair of the department and appropriate action will be taken. The same rules apply online as they do in person. Be respectful of other students.

#### Use of Large Language Models and Artificial Intelligence

The recent development of ChatGPT and other language models that rely on artificial intelligence provides a lot of useful informational tools for students. The use of these tools is not prohibited in this class, nay, it is strongly encouraged. You may use these tools to prepare, research, organize, or coordinate your assignments. However, all written product must be original work (including analysis assignments, exams, and the term paper.) If you use these tools to produce writing that is to be graded for the course, you will receive no credit for that assignment. TLDR: yes you can use ChatGPT, just not to write the paper for you.

#### Late Assignments

All assignments are due prior to class on the day assigned unless otherwise specified. Please check canvas regularly for changes to any assignment requirements, including due dates. Due to the nature of this course, falling behind on assignments will make it difficult for you to succeed in the class.

#### Required Readings

Campbell, K. K., & Jamieson, K. H. (2013). Presidents creating the presidency: Deeds done in words. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Various readings on the presidency provided on Canvas by the instructor

#### Grading

Exam 1 20%

Exam 2 20%

Analysis Paper 20%

Weekly Analysis Assignments 20%

In-Class Presentation 10%

Attendance 10%

### Part 3: Course Schedule

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Topic** | **Readings** | **Due** |
| Aug 22 | Introduction to the Course |  |  |
| Aug 24 | Rise of the Rhetorical Presidency | Caesar et Al (Canvas) |  |
| Aug 29 | Evolution of the Rhetorical Presidency | Teten (Canvas) |  |
| Aug 31 | Problems with the Rhetorical Presidency |  | Analysis #1 |
| Sep 5 | Generic Analysis as a Method | Campbell – Chapter 1 |  |
| Sep 7 | Power of Presidential Definition | Zarefsky (Canvas) | Analysis #2 |
| Sep 12 | Campaigning for the Presidency | Medhurst (Canvas) |  |
| Sep 14 | Campaign Advertising and Announcements |  | Analysis #3 |
| Sep 19 | Presidential Debates | Drury (Canvas) |  |
| Sep 21 | **NO CLASS – DEBATE TRAVEL** |  | Analysis #4 |
| Sep 26 | Presidential Debates – debate discussions |  |  |
| Sep 28 | The Inaugural Address | Campbell – Chapter 2 |  |
| Oct 3 | Student Presentations – Day 1 |  |  |
| Oct 5 | National Eulogies | Campbell – Chapter 4 | Analysis #5 |
| Oct 10 | Obama and the National Eulogy |  |  |
| Oct 12 | **Exam #1** |  | Paper Proposal Due |
| Oct 17 | **NO CLASS – FALL BREAK** |  |  |
| Oct 19 | The State of the Union Address | Campbell – Chapter 6 |  |
| Oct 24 | War Rhetoric | Campbell – Chapter 9 | Analysis #6 |
| Oct 26 | War Rhetoric | Ivie (Canvas) |  |
| Oct 31 | Student Presentations – Day 2 |  |  |
| Nov 2 | Apologia | Campbell – Chapter 10 |  |
| Nov 7 | Farewell Addresses | Campbell – Chapter 12 | Analysis #7 |
| Nov 9 | Rhetorical Approaches to Trump | Hart (Canvas) |  |
| Nov 14 | Rhetorical Approaches to Trump | Mercieca (Canvas) |  |
| Nov 16 | Rhetorical Approaches to Trump | Rowland (Canvas) |  |
| Nov 21 | Student Presentations – Day 3 |  |  |
| Nov 23 | **NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING** |  |  |
| Nov 28 | The Global Rhetorical Presidency | Prasch (Canvas) | Analysis #8 |
| Nov 30 | Conclusion Lecture |  |  |
| Dec 5 | Student Presentations – Day 4 |  |  |
| Dec 7 | **Exam #2** |  |  |
| Dec 15 |  |  | FINAL PAPER DUE 5pm |